



## **Manor Court, Salisbury    Phase 3**

**Proposed replacement of existing industrial building (old gravel works engineering & generator works) with new business (Class B1) premises, incl screened car parking area and ancillary landscaping**

### **PLANNING SUPPORT STATEMENT**

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## **1 Introduction & Application Background**

- 1.1 This Statement supports the planning application submitted by Mr & Mrs C Mustoe for the regeneration of the former Gravel Works engineering and power generator building located at the northern extremity of the Salesbury Hall Estate. The intention is to demolish and rebuild the existing premises, broadly reflecting the existing building mass and appearance, as well as closely following the existing building footprint.
- 1.2 Historically, the existing building serviced the long established gravel extraction facility at Salesbury (whereby gravel was recovered from the River Ribble bed by means of draglines, carried on internal roadways to processing bunkers adjacent to the remaining engineering building, and then transported off site for use on major construction projects within Lancashire). The internal road system provided good access to the nearby County highway and this link remains to the present day.
- 1.3 The gravel extraction business substantially ceased some 30 years ago although its permanency (from a planning point of view) was examined and confirmed as part of the County Council's Minerals Structure Plan in the 1990s. Consequently, when discussions concerning the regeneration of redundant farm buildings commenced with the Borough Council in 2003, following Mr and Mrs Mustoe's purchase of the Salesbury Estate, it was acknowledged that the gravel extraction permission remained extant (and that this possibility could legitimately feature in any dialogue regarding alternative uses or sensitive redevelopment).
- 1.4 Those discussions have continued in a very positive vein, to the present day, resulting in a highly successful building conversion schemes at Manor Court. A point relevant to the current proposal is that, when considering the Manor Court Phase 1 planning application, the applicants agreed with the Council to surrender the river extraction part of the gravel planning permission (through unilateral undertaking) although it was agreed with the Council that the former gravel works building would remain on site and with its historic engineering /storage use intact. However, from recent discussion with the County Planning Department it would appear that the County Council is unaware of this

agreement between the landowner and the Borough Council, resulting in the recently adopted Minerals LP Core Strategy mistakenly still making allowance for a resumption of gravel extraction from the Ribble floodplain at Salesbury.

- 1.5 Early apprehension on the part of the Borough Council and (at that time the County Council) regarding the principle of regenerating the substantial old farm buildings has proved to be misplaced. Whilst Salesbury is, indeed, a most attractive rural setting, the conversion and redevelopment of the redundant farm outbuildings to create a high-quality rural business centre has been undertaken to exemplary standards and demonstrates, today, the ability of outworn agricultural buildings to provide modern-day employment space.
- 1.6 With its substantial rural areas and the past high incidence of rural employment, the Borough Council policies support sensitive employment schemes of this nature. The emerging replacement local plan (Core Strategy) reaffirms commitment to provide for rural needs, as well as to regenerate suitable rural buildings. Those policies have been well aired in relation to the now complete Manor Court Phase 1 and Phase 2 projects. The applicants therefore hope that there is no need for them to support this new application with a thorough detailed examination against core rural policy, nor for them to have to prove to the Council their commitment to deliver employment projects of the highest quality and whose benefits will not only complement the Council's economic aims but where no harm would be caused to the local environment.

## 2 Application Intentions

- 2.1 This new application, therefore follows the principles already established by the Phase 1 and Phase 2 schemes and seeks to regenerate the existing building for a B1 employment use creating 958sq m of new mixed office and training floorspace (compared with an existing floor area of some 550 sq m). This would be achieved by dismantling the existing concrete faced / corrugated sheet roofed structure and replacing it with a stone faced, grey profiled roofed building of similar elavational appearance but modestly increased proportions.



Existing building

- 2.2 By working to the same building footprint but by modestly increasing the existing building height it would be possible to create a second-floor. The historic use as an engineering workshop and store required a high roof and large open internal volume which would be wasted on a straightforward conversion to a B1 single floor use. Various options have been considered in terms of adjusting the internal space and also of achieving the necessary structural and thermal upgrading to meet modern building standards. However by far the most cost-effective, visually attractive and floorspace efficient approach would be to rebuild (rather than convert) and that forms the basis of our clients' proposal.

- 2.3 The accompanying Design and Access Statement prepared by the project architects, SPA, explains the design intentions more thoroughly but (in terms of planning policy) the redevelopment option creates the most efficient use of available building volume, creates the opportunity for a high standard of thermal efficiency coupled with a biomass heating system and also enables the present less sympathetic building materials to be replaced by more traditional stone and slate.
- 2.4 Since purchasing Salesbury Hall Estate, Mr and Mrs Mustoe have worked with the County Council (under its stewardship initiative) to improve woodland quality as well as to plant significant new areas of woodland screening and hedging. Consequently the gravel works building is now significantly shielded from public view by the adjacent new woodland belt but also by the areas of new tree planting and hedging which have taken place close to the county highway.



Recently planted tree belt (to left) screening the gravel works building  
from public highway

- 2.5 Such planting will usefully serve to screen the new proposed development both during and after construction. It will also serve to screen associated parking areas. Moreover, tree planting has also been undertaken alongside the access

from the County road where substantial entrance gates were created to serve the Royal Lancashire show which was located for a short period at the Estate.

- 2.6 The applicants and their professional team therefore hope that the Council will acknowledge that the regeneration of the existing engineering building for class B1 office and training purposes is an appropriate use, and that the character and scale of development is appropriate having regard to what exists at present and to the availability of suitable landscape screening. A further background consideration is the extent to which Mr and Mrs Mustoe have improved the appearance of this substantial estate over the past decade and it is noteworthy that until relatively recently the area immediately adjoining the gravel works building contained substantial concrete bunkers, roadways and storage compounds (as seen in the historic aerial photograph).
- 2.7 The site's proximity to the River Ribble will hopefully benefit the project by providing an outstanding setting capable of attracting high-quality commercial occupiers. At the same time it imposes a cautionary requirement in terms of flood risk credentials since much of the Salesbury Hall estate occupies the historic River Ribble floodplain, with the area closest to the river being within Flood Zones 2 or 3. The applicants are confident that the scheme recognises flood risk principles, as confirmed in the Flood Risk Assessment which accompanies the application. FRA's were prepared and discussed with the Environment Agency for both the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Manor Court schemes. As part of the Phase 1 assessment the analysis was extended to include the gravel works building and it was established that the building and its access sat above the 1 in 100 year maximum flood level.
- 2.8 The flood risk position has been reviewed against contemporary data and river modelling, and the scheme design recognises those conclusions. The Design and Access Statement confirms that building reconstruction will allow the existing ground floor level to be modestly lifted slightly to give an even greater safety factor. The car park and access way similarly stand above the maximum flood datum.
- 2.9 The application is also accompanied by a Stage One Ecological Scoping Assessment in respect of the existing building. This concludes that, because of

its open nature and corrugated sheet roof, it would not normally be attractive to bats for roosting purposes but any grant of permission could be conditioned to require a more thorough survey (plus mitigation) prior to commencement of development.

2.10 Finally, the Phase 1 and Phase 2 schemes have demonstrated that visiting traffic imposes no burden upon the adjacent County road nor its junction with the principal road adjacent to the Ribchester Bridge. The applicants are therefore confident that the limited traffic associated with the Phase 3 Gravel Works scheme will be light in nature and low in volume. The intention to subdivide the building and encourage small users is preferable (in traffic terms) to having a single user characterised by fixed employee arrival and departure times. This would create more pronounced peak flows and would especially be the case were the existing building to be re-utilised for engineering purposes.

2.11 The County Surveyor has been consulted as part of the pre-application discussions with the Borough Council's planning team and we understand there are no objections either in terms of traffic generation nor the capability of the existing site access to serve continued commercial use.

2.12 The Planning Department's pre-application written response is attached to this Statement. This confirms the broad acceptability of the proposal, including principle of intended use, impact on the open countryside, scale of development, design approach and intended access arrangements. The response highlights the need for accompanying reports, and these are met through the submitted Design and Access Statement, Flood Risk Assessment and Stage 1 Bat Assessment.

### **3 Planning Policy**

3.1 Whilst the broad question of planning principle has previously been addressed through examination of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 applications, it is relevant to

comment briefly about the changes which have taken place to the planning regime since early 2003 (when the first discussions were held with the Council for the regeneration of the redundant farm buildings).

3.2 At that early stage the submitted proposal was assessed against the adopted Local Plan and in particular against policies G1 and G5 which dealt with the principle and design of new development in the open countryside. Other policies (for example G7 dealing with flood risk, G8 dealing with sustainable development, ENV3 dealing with the character of the open countryside and ENV22 , confirming the Council's wish to encourage the reuse of derelict, disused and obsolete land and buildings in the open countryside were taken into consideration), as well as the rural policies (then prevailing) of the County Structure Plan.

3.3 Local Plan policies continue to have a bearing upon planning decisions in the short-term but will eventually be replaced by the new local development plan. Emerging Council policy research addresses the importance of protecting the appearance of the open countryside but also of supporting and diversifying the rural economy. The submitted scheme respects both those key aims (as did the predecessor Phase 1 and 2 schemes).

3.4 However, given the age of the soon to be replaced Local Plan, its policies will have declining weight in any balanced planning decision against the more contemporary background provided by the National Planning Policy Framework. That position changes further very shortly by the requirements to have increased regard to NPPF after March 2013 where adopted planning policy has not been replaced by an appropriate development plan review.

3.5 NPPF therefore should have considerable weight in the determination of this new application. Its aims and policies are relevant in the following respects:-

a) Sustainable development

The proposal supports each of the three identified roles of sustainable development by delivering economic, social and environmental benefits. Sustainability is not been measured purely in terms of travel distance from a recognised service centre or bus route (as often in the past) but rather as

mutually interdependent features which can secure higher social and environmental standards, well-designed buildings and places which improve the lives of people and communities.

NPPF re-emphasises the presumption in favour of sustainable development and requires planning authorities to approve development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay. However where the development plan is absent, silent or where relevant policies are out of date, authorities should also grant permission unless any adverse impacts of so doing would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against all the policies of the Framework.

b) Economic benefits

The proposal meets with the Government's commitment to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, building on the country's inherent strengths and meeting the twin challenges of global competition and a low carbon future. This is in the knowledge that Central Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.

Furthermore, investment in business should not be overburdened by the combined requirements of planning policy expectations. Existing business sectors should be supported, taking account of whether they are expanding or contracting.

c) The Rural Economy

NPPF explains that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity and by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. Authorities should support sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings. The submitted proposal respects and supports these important aims.

d) Sustainable Building

The possible effects of climate change have an important place in National Planning Policy, requiring new development to respond to possible environmental change (including potential flood risk) but also creating a strong direction towards energy efficient construction and low carbon energy supply systems. The proposed development has taken account of any possible flood risk connected with the adjacent River Ribble and has been designed to avoid any risk to users or any adverse impact upon the capacity of the floodplain, itself.

Any sequential test should also recognise the existing Class B2 use for the existing building and would hopefully conclude that an exception can be made, especially taking account of the improved safety features which would follow from redevelopment as a two-storey building.

A feature of the proposal (as explained in the accompanying Design and Access Statement) is the commitment to low carbon design and construction and also on-site low carbon energy provision through a biomass system.

e) The Natural Environment

The proposal respects the importance placed by NPPF upon protecting and enhancing the natural and local environment. Since purchasing the Estate, the applicants have worked with the statutory authorities to improve the landscape and protect wildlife. Given that the application site already enjoys an employment use capable of attracting activity, users and vehicles we submit that the new proposal would continue to respect matters of local importance and would place no greater burden upon the appearance or function of the countryside.

## 4 Planning Assessment

- 4.1 The proposal is respectful of the core principles of NPPF, is consistent with the Council's current and emerging planning policy and is a natural progression from the highly successful Phase 1 and Phase 2 Manor Court schemes which have already been tested against adopted policy, via the planning application process.
- 4.2 It offers an opportunity to regenerate significant industrial building for a new employment use, capable of supporting the rural economy and delivering high-quality jobs.



Present substantial (concrete walled) construction.  
The replacement scheme proposes natural stone walls

- 4.3 Its design follows the exemplary principles of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 projects with a strong commitment to the use of traditional materials together with sensitive site treatment, screening and landscaping. The existing building is of substantial concrete and brick construction and whilst the concrete exterior was built to imitate natural coursed stone, closer examination quickly confirms that the walling and roofing materials are modern in nature and sit uneasy with the local vernacular. This argues for a new roof and new walling using more

traditional materials but on that basis demolition and sensitive reconstruction would be the most logical and cost-effective course to take.

- 4.4 Reconstruction also creates the opportunity to introduce more energy efficient design, together with on-site energy production through a biomass system.
- 4.5 In its pre-app consultation response, the County Planning Department raised no objection to the principle of site regeneration for B1 purposes, having been supplied with the scheme drawings indicating intended scale of development and proposed external appearance. However this assumed that the works would be of conversion/extension (rather than demolition/rebuild) since it pointed out that a completely new structure could conflict with the Minerals LP Core Strategy which sought to protect future gravel extraction in this location. Further discussion with the County Case Officer has clarified that the historic gravel extraction permission has now been rescinded, so hopefully LCC will raise no objection to either of the development options, especially given the rural employment benefits which offer a county-wide benefit.
- 4.6 However, we would suggest that any planning assessment should not be influenced by the intended building method since both options deliver a virtually identical building, involving similar investment and identical business floorspace. Rather, the scheme should be assessed on its planning merits, against the policy background provided by statutory policy and NPPF.
- 4.7 Government guidance emphasises that “sustainability” is measured by a combination of benefits (in other words it is not a simple calculation of distance from the nearest service centre or bus route). Thus, a balanced assessment must be made of each proposal to take account of all its economic, social and environmental components. Using those principles we believe that the submitted scheme genuinely proposes sustainable development worthy of the grant of planning permission.